

Letter from Taizé

Bimonthly 3.50 FF

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October - November 1993

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Practical information about the European meeting

EVERY WEEK,

A MEETING OF YOUNG ADULTS IN TAIZÉ

PROCESSED

OCT 13 1993

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"Praying together teaches us how to love"

From the springtime to the month of November, week after week, dozens of coaches arrive in Taizé every Sunday, and others leave, turning the car park into a huge bus station. The writing on the coaches gives a hint of the different backgrounds of the groups that come; they are from throughout Europe, from Bulgaria to Portugal, from Greece to Estonia. But as soon as the passengers get off, they resemble one another by their common expectations, their concern for one another, and their search for the wellsprings of a life with Christ.

The most important thing about the succession of international weeks is not spectacular and is hard to describe or measure easily. It is first of all the discovery that, in each person's basic searching (what does Christ expect of me?), we are all on the same level. This becomes clear in the common prayer.

Although Europeans represent the majority, the presence of young people from other continents is no less essential. They are the sign that the different parts of the world need one another. They bring the diversity of their experiences and give everyone a wider vision of the universality of the Church.

Each Saturday evening, when Noé, a boy from the village of Taizé, and other children who are there for the week, bring flowers to the young people from all the nations present, they mention in particular those from Africa, Asia and Latin America. Worthy of special mention are those from India, who come in groups of ten to twelve for a two-month stay. Then there are the young South Africans, black and white, including several from Soweto, who spend several months in Taizé while continuing to follow events back home with great attention. There are young Africans studying in Algeria who, unable to return to their own country in the summer, spend time in Taizé each year. There

are the Bolivians, the Mexicans, the Chileans...

With the opening of frontiers in Europe, for the first time in history a generation is able to cross political, cultural and historical borders peacefully.

The presence of those from Eastern Europe is important because of the number and the diversity of the nations represented. The remarkable thing is that they do not come to complain about the political complications of their democracies, which are still undergoing birth pangs, nor about their economic difficulties. They come to share the signs of hope that give them a reason for continuing, to go to the wellsprings of forgiveness and reconciliation that make a future possible.

Another remarkable thing is the fact that everyone is able to listen to one another, to accept one another with good will. That makes it possible to find joy in the thousand and one meetings that make up the week spent together. To get to Taizé, they have all made a trying journey, crossing borders, covering hundreds and sometimes thousands of kilometers. Finding themselves side by side for an experience of common life, they discover the gifts of each person

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IN MUNICH,

AT THE END OF THE YEAR

Doors Will Open

The ground has already been well prepared to welcome a meeting centred on the theme "inner life and human solidarities."

The capital of Bavaria, which will host the European meeting, is known for its *joie de vivre* and its hospitality. On the other hand, many of its inhabitants have only recently arrived there. Great loneliness can be found; the percentage of people who live alone is the highest in all Germany.

In Bavaria, traditions remain alive. The link between faith and life is often very explicit. In Bavarian culture, Christian life is both a place to find roots and a call to take risks. Many stories witness to the fact that concern for the very poor, for the elderly, for foreigners and for the ill has always been an aspect of parish life. The ground has already been well prepared to welcome a meeting centred on the theme "inner life and human solidarities."

Links between Bavaria and Taizé go back a long time. Many groups come to Taizé. Often these groups are made up of young people from different parishes in the same area. This year the Lutheran bishop of Munich, Johannes Hanselmann, spent several days in Taizé, and two years ago the Catholic archbishop, Cardinal Wetter, likewise came for a stay. In 1978, Brother Roger left for several weeks in South Africa and in a slum in Kenya, where one of the open letters to the young was written, after a prayer in the cathedral of Munich. The parishes of the city welcomed with joy, as a kind of dis-

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tant echo of that prayer, the announcement that the next European meeting would take place in their city.

Many initiatives have been undertaken to begin to prepare the meeting: "We want to integrate the preparation into the life of the parish; so that everyone will take part, we are going to bring up the idea at the parish council meeting. Then we will take to all the families in the neighbourhood the parish bulletin that speaks about it.

"Instead of just placing them in people's mailboxes, we will knock on their doors to give them the information personally and invite them to offer hospitality to participants. Many are already happy to do this. A few months ago we took the initiative of planting flowers around a welcome centre for refugees located in our neighbourhood. The European meeting will give us an opportunity to accomplish even more concrete gestures."

NOT JUST AMONG CHRISTIANS

Many young adults from Munich came to Taizé this summer to take part in the meetings. When they were asked what they were hoping for the most from the gathering in December, certain words kept coming up: the joy of being together, an opening to the world, a new impetus for Christian communities, an experience of simplicity, a sign of welcome for foreigners, prayer... All of these desires are also shared by the young Europeans who will come to Munich.

There is one thing that concerns the inhabitants of the Bavarian capital more particularly: finding places to accommodate all those who will come. This task is leading them to find ways of being open to all and to ask all people of good will to open their doors. The city administration, for its part, has already offered to collaborate by assuring that, in spite of the Christmas holidays, it will keep the schools open.

To find the number of places necessary, the inhabitants of Munich will demonstrate their inventivity: "I will make sure the meeting is not known just among Christians, but also in the high schools. In each class we can find a contact person.

"When I speak about the meeting as an opportunity to show hospitality, many people understand. My fellow students have heard about Taizé. Even if some come at first to one of the prayers out of curiosity, I think they will be touched deeply, and perhaps awakened."

PREPARING TO MEET

FROM 28 DECEMBER 1993 TO 1 JANUARY 1994

On the Road to Munich

The months before the European meeting in Munich are a time of preparation not just in the parishes of that city but also for all those who plan to come from all the countries of Europe.

How can we set out toward this new stage in the pilgrimage of trust?

In every region of Europe, some people will coordinate the preparation and help to organize the trip, by coach or by train. A preliminary list of local contacts can be found on page 7.

Prayer is an essential part of the preparation. Regular common prayers will bring together all who are setting out for Munich. Sometimes there will be a larger prayer service to include other people who wish to be a part of the pilgrimage of trust. Those who wish can find elements for such a prayer in the previous Letter from Taizé. Many have already expressed their intention to propose a prayer service on the theme of light, as they did last year. Prayer formats can be sent from Taizé to those who wish them.

During the meetings of preparation, there can be three times of reflection on the letter *Awaken to a Joy*. Here are some questions to help with the small-group sharing.

1. Welcome a Gospel light.

Read the first two parts of the letter. After a time of silence, each person can say in a few words what they have found important for their own life in the text, or reply to one of the following questions.

-What helps us always to move from doubt to trust, from darkness towards the light of the Gospel?

-Has it already happened that a Gospel text or an event in Christ's life has shed light on my journey and has given me confidence?

-When we reflect on our own life, how can we avoid falling into a narrow introspection and keep our eyes focussed on Christ, on his love?

-When I feel a thirst, a lack, is it fear that is most important, or the desire to find the wellspring?

-How can we recognize the fountain of living water placed in us?

-What does the Gospel call "Come, follow me" mean for me now?

The following Bible texts can accompany the reflection: John 8,12; John 12,44-47; Hebrews 12,1-2; Philippians 3,13-14; Jeremiah 2,13; John 4,1-42.

2. All God can give is his love.

Read the third and fourth parts of the letter.

Some questions for the small groups:

-What have I understood of Christ's love? How can I let that love touch the deepest parts of my being?

-What sign of reconciliation, which I have personally witnessed or which which I am familiar, has opened a new future for someone, in a family, in a Christian community, in the life of nations?

-What steps can I take right now to be a peacemaker, to support those who are looking for reconciliation?

Bible texts: Luke 5,27-32; Genesis 50,15-21; 1 Peter 2,21-25; Romans 8,31-39

3. The beauty of a communion.

Read the two last parts of the letter.

Some questions for the small groups:

-What does being a woman or man of communion mean for me in my own situation?

-How can I discover those whom God has entrusted to me?

-Where could I go each week to be with children, with elderly persons (notes 23 and 25)?

-What face of the Church do our Christian communities, parishes and congregations, reflect? How can we be attentive to what other groups or communities show us of the living Christ?

Bible texts: Matthew 18,1-5; Acts of the Apostles 4,32-35; Isaiah 58,5-12; Revelation 21,2-5

The preparation for the European meeting in Munich is an opportunity, in each country and region, to make a great many visits to parishes and youth groups. In this way, many

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PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Dates: from Tuesday 28 December 1993 (arrival between 7am and noon) to Saturday 1 January 1994.

Programme: participants will be welcomed by families and Christian communities in Munich and the surrounding area. Mornings, in each district a prayer followed by a time of reflection and meeting with persons committed locally. Each day, two times of common prayer will bring everyone together in large halls in the centre of the city, and in the afternoon, there will be theme-groups.

Accommodations will be simple: bring air-mattress and sleeping-bag. Staying with families, in parishes and schools is another way of sharing, so do not plan separate accommodation for your group.

Those between 18 and 30 years old can choose between three possibilities: -taking part in the life of a parish, -silent group (separate accommodations), -while sharing in the life of a parish, helping the work teams, the animation of the meetings or the singing preparation for the prayer. In this case you must arrive on Sunday 26 December, between 8am and 3pm (no one can arrive on 27 December!).

It is necessary for a number of young people (about one for every twenty participants) to arrive on 26 December.

Those who are 16 or 17 years old can take part in the meeting if they are with group-leaders who are over 20 and who remain with them; there should be at least one group-leader for every seven of them, boys and girls separate. The only possibility open to them is to arrive on 28 December (not before) to take part in the life of a parish.

Adults over 30 also must arrive on 28 December (not before) and can take part in the life of a parish. If they cannot share the same simple accommodations as the young, and if they need a bed, they should indicate this on their registration form. If they are with a group of young people, they can remain with them as long as they agree to share their living conditions.

Families and young persons who are handicapped should call the welcome at Taizé in October or November to see about accommodations.

Costs: At the end of October, an estimate for the cost of the meeting for each person (meals, transportation, equipment...) will be given; it will probably not be too different from the meeting in Vienna last year.

Preparation: See the suggestions given on pp. 2-3. It is essential for each participant to realize that he or she is coming to Munich to take part in a pilgrimage and already to enter into the spirit of this before leaving home.

Registration: fill out the enclosed form. Those travelling with a group should give it to the group-leader. Those coming with just a few others, or by themselves, as well as those needing special accommodations, should send it to Taizé.

Journey: in each region, groups should come together to make the journey by coach. See the list of contact persons on p. 7.

Registration deadline: 1 December. Those who plan to organize a group to go to Munich should contact Taizé as soon as possible, before 1 November.

Travel: 1. Coach: Departure from London 3.00pm 27th Dec. Return to London 2nd January early morning. Various other pick-up points. Return fare £90 regardless of pick-up point or age. Nuneaton Coaches, Whitacre Road, NUNEATON CV11 6BN Tel: (0203) 325682 Fax (0203) 375875. 2. Train: Euro-youth ticket (under 26) £196. Means leaving London around 9.00am 27th Dec., arriving Munich 8.50am next morning. Check nearer Christmas for special offers. 3. Air: Many flights available, for example Student Travel Agency (071 937 9921) offers British Airways flight to Munich. Leave Heathrow 8.15am, arrive Munich 11.00am 28th Dec 1993. Return leave Munich 5.30pm, arrive Heathrow 6.30pm 1st Jan 1994. Price for full-time students under 32 or young people under 26: £146.50. (otherwise £178.00). 4. To arrive on December 26th to help: travel with a coach leaving Taizé on December 25th (contact Taizé).

people can anticipate the visits to "places of hope" which they will make during the meeting itself. When they discover in their own situation witnesses who give of themselves and their time for others, they will have still more to share, during the European meeting, with others who, in each country, are looking for a stronger commitment.

COME TWO DAYS EARLY TO HELP

Many are preparing themselves to take on responsibilities during the meeting, in the welcome or work teams. This help has become even more necessary because of the increase in the number of participants. It would be good to have more people who come two days early to help with the different needs. Three months after returning from Vienna, Ana, from Barcelona, wrote about this:

"The first days required me to adapt because of the availability that was asked of me, and showed me my limits. I learned to live more truly the values of availability and generosity, and in this way I was led to renew my trust. Because of the work entrusted to me, at


first I had the impression that I was missing part of the meeting. Afterwards I can say that it was the best meeting I ever attended. After going to many other European meetings, it was my turn to give and to welcome others as they are."

To the extent that everyone lives the time of preparation as the beginning of a pilgrimage, the gathering in Munich will be a event in common that will enable everyone to continue, in their own situation, to undertake a journey of trust and reconciliation.

Taizé
European
Meeting of
Young Adults
28 December 1993
- 1 January 1994
Munich

Registration Form

Send in by December 1st either to a contact person (Britain) or (if you live outside Britain) to Taizé. Send to: European meeting, F-71250 TAIZE-COMMUNAUTE, Tel. (+33) 8550 30 02 (9-11am and 1.30-5.30pm), Fax (+33) 8550 30 16.



First Name: _____

Family Name: _____

Address: _____

(with postcode and country)

Tel.: _____ / _____ Occupation: _____ Age: _____

(Circle "Yes" or "No" or complete where necessary)

- I am coming with a group from the town of _____ led by _____

- For adults (over 30 years) and those who cannot sleep on the floor: I need a bed: yes / no If "yes", say whether you are (please circle): woman man couple family with... children disabled person with helper

- I will arrive on 28th December: yes / no (arrival time between 7am and 12pm)

- I will arrive on 26th December (17-30 year olds only): yes / no to help with (please circle): animation / work / music team.

- N.B. If, for any reason, you are arranging your own accommodation please send us the address where you will be staying.

- I would like _____ more registration forms (photocopy your own if possible)

Communion in God

At the beginning of his first letter (1 John 1,1-4), Saint John speaks of "something which we have heard...seen with our own eyes...watched...touched with our hands..." The Christian faith is not a theory, an ideology or a philosophy; it is rooted in a concrete experience. But this tangible reality is at the same time "the word of life...the eternal life, which was present to the Father and has been revealed to us." In other words, in the existence of Christ Jesus, a human among humans, the secret of God's own Life becomes accessible to us. This is the reality which the apostles wish to communicate to those who come after them.

For what reason? "We are declaring to you what we have seen and heard, so that you too may have fellowship (communion) with us." Communicating the Gospel leads to the creation of *koinonia*, a word usually translated "fellowship, communion, shared life." And this *koinonia* is not merely human: "Our *koinonia* is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." And John concludes, "We are writing this to you so that our joy may be complete." When we discover the secret of life, the reason why we exist, when we enter into this human and divine communion, we experience perfect joy, true happiness. So it is not without importance to try and understand more deeply the meaning of *koinonia* in the Bible.

In the Old Testament, although the notion of *koinonia* is absent, we discover its two dimensions in the story of a God who goes towards human beings in order to create a people (e.g. Gen 12,1-2; 13,14-16; 15,5...). In a word, it is found in what the Bible calls the *covenant*: "I will be your God and you will be my people."

Among the Bible texts that speak of the covenant, the centre is undoubtedly the story of Sinai (Ex 19,3-8). God begins by recalling what he did to show his mercy—saving the Israelites from slavery and giving them a new life. Now that they are free, they

have to make a choice: do they want to be God's people or not? If they accept this offer, there is a consequence: their identity must become clear by the way they live. In other words, they have to live according to the Lord's commandments, in justice and solidarity (see e.g. Ex 23,1-9).

Being God's people is not a privilege but a responsibility towards others, for God is the God of the entire earth (cf. Ex 19,5). In Biblical language, Israel is called to be "a kingdom of priests, a holy nation" (Ex 19,6). In the ancient world, a priest was an intermediary between God and human beings; Israel, as a "priestly people," is thus called to communicate to the rest of humanity, by its existence, the identity and the will of the living God.

The Bible makes it clear that, most of the time, Israel did not live fully its mission to be a sign of God in the midst of human history. So prophets arose to remind the people of its calling and to invite it to a *metanoia*, a reversal of perspectives. The prophets never lost their hope that, one day, God would find the way to make the nation what it should be. This hope is seen, for example, in the vision we find in Isaiah 2,2-4: the people will be transformed to become a pole of attraction for the entire world; all nations will come in order to discover God and his will, and this will lead to peace on earth. In other words, all will recognize God as king; God's kingdom will encompass the whole of humanity.

This vision found in the book of Isaiah provides a key to understand the mission of Jesus Christ. Jesus did not come to start a new religion, but to fulfill the hopes of his people, to bring to completion the project God was undertaking from the beginning. Thus he proclaims "the good news of the Kingdom" to the people as a whole, authenticating it by acts of healing (Matt 4,23-25) and choosing co-workers to help him in this task (Matt 10). The number "twelve" used to characterize the closest collaborators of

Jesus signifies unambiguously that he is undertaking a restoration of the people of God (the "twelve tribes" descended from the twelve sons of Jacob), called to discover its true identity. That is also why Jesus sends his apostles only "to the lost sheep of the House of Israel" (Matt 10,5-6): just as in Isaiah's vision, the renewal and the gathering of Israel will be the prelude to the participation of the other nations.

Expressed differently, Jesus wants to turn his people Israel into a family, the family of God. If Jesus does not seem overly interested in his own relatives, that is because he has come to start a family based not on blood ties but on a relationship with God (Matt 12,46-50; cf. 10,34-37). What seems to be a renunciation or a break is in fact the entry into a wider communion (Mark 10,29-30). This new family, which includes hundreds of brothers and sisters and mothers, has only one Father, the one in heaven (cf. Matt 23,9). The one Jesus calls "Abba" is the sole source of security for those who entrust themselves to him; entering the family of the heavenly Father means living lives of radical trust in God (Luke 12,22-32) and in other people (Luke 10,4ff).

On the eve of his death, Jesus expresses by an eloquent gesture the meaning of his coming. By taking the family meal of Passover with the twelve apostles, he prefigures the new family of God, Israel renewed, to be created by the gift of his life. The cross is not the end of his story but a new beginning, which leads to the resurrection and the gift of the Holy Spirit. The feast of Pentecost is the Jewish holy day which celebrates the Sinai covenant and the gift of the Law. But that year, in Jerusalem, it became the occasion for a new beginning: the Holy Spirit, given in fire and wind, turns the disciples into a community of prayer and sharing (Acts 2). This *koinonia* with God and among human beings, soon to be open to "all those who are far away," (v.39), is the sign that God is fully at work at the heart of his world.

MEDITATING ON THE WORD

NOVEMBER

JOHANNINE HOURS

EXODUS 16,1-21

These short readings, taken from the midday prayer in Taizé, can be read several times during the day. The references indicate longer readings. If you have time to read only one, the one in bold type is suggested.

Johannine hours are meant as a way of seeking God in silence and prayer in the midst of our daily life. During the course of a day, take an hour or so to read the Bible passage with the short commentary and to reflect on the questions which follow. Afterwards, a group of 3 to 10 people can meet to share what they have discovered and perhaps for a time of prayer.

1 MON ALL SAINTS Jesus said: Happy are they who hunger and thirst for justice, for they shall be filled. Happy are the merciful, for mercy will be shown to them.

Mt 5.1-12 1 Jn 3.1-3

2 TUE Jesus said to Martha: I am the resurrection. The one who believes in me shall live, even though he dies. And whoever lives and believes in me shall never die.

Jn 11.25-26 Rm 14.7-9

3 WED Happy are they who are not in anguish over their failings and who do not founder in despair. For if they are hard upon themselves, to whom will they be kind?

Si 14.1-16 Lk 12.13-21

4 THU Jesus said: Seek first God's Kingdom, and all other things will be given to you as well.

Lk 12.22-31 Si 17.1-12

5 FRI Jesus said: Give to those in need. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure that will not fail, in heaven where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Lk 12.32-34 Si 28.2-7

6 SAT Dupe the cares that weigh upon you, console your heart, chase sorrow far away, for sorrow is no use to anybody.

Si 30.21-23 Lk 12.35-40

7 SUN Jesus said: God is not a God of the dead but of the living; for him all people are alive.

Lk 20.34-38 1 Th 4.13-18

8 MON Jesus said: I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already burning!

Lk 12.49-50 Si 34.15-17

9 TUE The Lord will not be slow in the service of justice for his people. He will make them rejoice in his mercy.

Si 35.17-24 Lk 13.6-9

10 WED Sing and rejoice, my people, for I am coming to live among you, says the Lord.

Zc 2.14-17 Lk 13.10-17

11 THU Jesus said: The kingdom of God is like leaven that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it all rose.

Lk 13.18-21 Zc 8.4-8

12 FRI The Lord says: Speak the truth to one another. At your gates, administer true judgement conducive to peace.

Zc 8.13-17 Lk 14.7-11

13 SAT Jesus said: When you have a dinner, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind, and you will be blessed, for they have no means to repay you.

Lk 14.12-14 Ne 9.17-19

14 SUN Jesus said: Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

Mk 13.24-32 1 Th 5.1-6

15 MON Paul writes: Despite great suffering, you welcomed the Word of God with the joy of the Holy Spirit, and so you became an model for all believers.

1 Th 1.1-7 Lk 14.15-23

16 TUE Jesus said: Whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

Lk 14.25-33 1 Th 2.2-7

17 WED Paul writes: We give thanks to God because when you heard the Word you received it not as a human word, but for what it really is, God's word, which is at work in you.

1 Th 2.13-14 Lk 15.1-7

18 THU Jesus said: There is rejoicing among the angels of God over one repentant sinner.

Lk 15.8-10 1 Th 3.6-10

19 FRI May God make your love increase so that it overflows for each other and for everyone. May he confirm your hearts.

1 Th 3.11-13 Lk 15.11-24

20 SAT Paul writes: It is God's will that you should be made holy.

1 Th 4.1-3 Lk 15.25-32

21 SUN Jesus said: In truth I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.

Mt 25.34-43 Ezk 34.11-17

22 MON Be always joyful, pray continually and give thanks in all circumstances.

1 Th 5.16-24 Lk 16.9-15

23 TUE God chose you from the beginning to be saved by faith in the truth and by the Spirit.

2 Th 2.13-14 Lk 17.3-6

24 WED God will make his home among human beings; they will be his people and he will be their God.

Rv 21.1-4 Lk 17.7-10

25 THU Jesus said: The coming of the kingdom of God cannot be observed, for the kingdom of God is among you.

Lk 17.20-21 Rv 21.5-7

26 FRI Jesus said: The Son of man has come to seek out and save what was lost.

Lk 19.1-10 Rv 21.10-25

27 SAT The servants of God will see him face to face and his name will be written on their foreheads. It will never be night again, and they will not need the light of a lamp or of the sun, because the Lord God will be shining upon them.

Rv 22.1-5 Lk 21.1-4

28 SUN ADVENT You come to the help of those who gladly do right, Lord; keeping your ways reminds them of you.

Is 63.16-64.7 Mk 13.33-37

29 MON A centurion said to Jesus: Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; but only speak the word and my servant will be healed.

Mt 8.5-11 Is 4.2-6

30 TUE St ANDREW Paul writes: For me, preaching the Gospel is not something to boast about, it is a necessity.

1 Co 9.16-23 Mk 16.15-20

When we are in an unpleasant situation, we are tempted to look for someone to blame. In this way, we project our discomfort on another person in the hope of finding relief. Thus the Israelites in the wilderness "complain" about Moses and Aaron, recalling the wonderful—and illusory—days gone by in Egypt.

But the drama for God's people is that, in looking for a scapegoat, in the end they are forced to turn against God himself. God is the sole Source of their life, their true guide: refusing their situation and the road they must follow means ultimately destroying the very ground of their being.

Fortunately, God remains present in order to show the people the folly of their behaviour. And God does this not by criticizing them but by giving an additional proof of his love. He nourishes his people directly, and this makes possible an experience of perfect justice and sharing (v.18). But this gift is at the same time a "test": human beings, always tempted to hoard their possessions, must learn to live from day to day, in the joyful trust that God will provide all that is necessary.

- Have I gone through "desert experiences" when I had to learn to trust in God alone and to receive everything from him?
- What helps us, in times of difficulty, to keep alive the confidence that God has not abandoned us?
- This text links trust in God and sharing among people. How can we show this link by the way we live as believers?

You can also read: Matthew 6,25-34; John 6,1-14 & 26-35

MEDITATING ON THE WORD

DECEMBER

These short readings, taken from the midday prayer in Taizé, can be read several times during the day. The references indicate longer readings. If you have time to read only one, the one in bold type is suggested.

1 WED Jesus said: Whoever listens to my words and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on rock.

Mt 7.21-27 Is 5.1-4

2 THU Isaiah heard an angel of the Lord tell him: Your guilt has been removed, your sin forgiven.

Is 6.1-8 Mt 9.27-31

3 FRI Isaiah said: When he laid his hand upon me, God told me, "Do not fear all that people fear. Do not be afraid. I am the one whom you are to regard as holy."

Is 8.11-18 Lk 5.17-26

4 SAT May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through, and may your spirit, soul and body be kept blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

1 Th 5.23-24 Lk 1.5-17

5 SUN John the Baptist said: After me will come one more powerful than I. I baptise you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit.

Mk 1.1-8 Is 40.1-11

6 MON Isaiah said: On that day there shall be no more hurt or violence, for the land will be filled with the knowledge of God as the water covers the bottom of the sea.

Is 11.9-9 Mt 18.12-14

7 TUE Jesus sent out the twelve, saying: Proclaim that the kingdom of heaven is close at hand. Freely you have received, freely give.

Mt 9.38-10.8 Is 11.10-16

8 WED God, who guides all things according to his will, has chosen us to be, for the praise of his glory, the people who would put their hopes in Christ.

Ep 1.11-12 Lk 1.26-38

9 THU I will trust and not be afraid, for God is my strength and my song.

Is 12.2-6 Mt 11.16-19

10 FRI Lord, you have been a refuge for the weak, a shelter for then needy in distress.

Is 25.1-5 Mt 17.10-13

11 SAT Zechariah prophesied: Blessed be the Lord, for he has visited and redeemed his people, and established for us a power of salvation.

Lk 1.67-75 Is 25.6-8

12 SUN John said: I baptise with water; but standing among you — unknown to you — is the one who is coming after me; and I am not fit to undo the strap of his sandal.

Jn 1.6-7,19-28 Is 61.1-11

13 MON John the Baptist said to the people: Anyone who has two tunics must share with the one who has none. And anyone with something to eat must do the same.

Lk 3.10-18 Is 25.9-10

14 TUE Lord, you level out the path of the just. As we follow the path of your judgements, we set our hope in you; you are the desire of our souls.

Is 26.4-9 Lk 7.18-23

15 WED Lord, you establish peace for us. All that we have accomplished, you have done for us.

Is 26.12-19 Lk 7.24-30

16 THU The Lord says: Your salvation is in returning and rest, your strength lies in calm and trust.

Is 30.15-18 Jn 5.33-36

17 FRI Jesus said to his disciples: The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few, so ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest.

Mt 9.35-38 Is 49.13

18 SAT The Lord says: The days are coming, when I shall raise up an upright Branch, and in his days my people will be saved. And this is the name he will be called: "The Lord our Righteousness."

Jr 23.5-6 Mt 11.2-11

19 SUN Mary said to the angel: I am the Lord's servant, let it happen to me as you have said.

Lk 1.26-38 Rm 16.25-27

20 MON You need to persevere. For in just a very little while, he who is coming will come — he will not delay.

Heb 10.36-37 Lk 1.39-45

21 TUE Mary said: The Lord's merciful love stretches from age to age upon those who revere him.

Lk 1.46-56 Zp 3.14-18

22 WED Hannah prayed in these words: My heart rejoices in the Lord and in his deliverance. There is no Holy One like the Lord, no Rock like our God.

1 S 1.24-2.1 Lk 1.57-66

23 THU Zechariah, father of John the Baptist, prophesied: You, little child, will be called Prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare a way for him.

Lk 1.76-79 Mt 3.1-4

24 FRI The angel of the Lord said to the shepherds: Do not be afraid. I bring you news of a great joy, a joy to be shared by all the people: today a Saviour has been born to you, he is Christ the Lord.

Lk 2.1-14 Is 9.1-6 Tt 2.11-14

25 SAT CHRISTMAS The shepherds hurried to Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. When they saw the child they repeated what they had been told about him and then returned glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen.

Lk 2.15-20 Is 62.11-12 Tt 3.4-7

26 SUN When Simeon saw the child Jesus, he praised God and said: Now, Lord, you can let your servant depart in peace as you promised. For my eyes have seen the salvation you have prepared for all people to see.

Lk 2.22-40 Heb 11.8-10

27 MON St JOHN Life itself became visible, we saw it and testify to it. We proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was revealed to us.

1 Jn 1.1-4 Mk 1.16-20

28 TUE Should our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts and knows all things.

1 Jn 3.18-20 Mt 18.1-4

29 WED Seeing that many of his disciples were turning away, Jesus said to the Twelve, "What about you, do you want to go away too?" Peter answered, "Lord, to whom would we go? You have the words of eternal life."

Jn 6.63-69 Jr 31.31-34

30 THU Though you have not seen Christ Jesus, you love him. Still without seeing him you believe in him and so are already filled with a joy so glorious it cannot be described.

1 P 1.6-9 Jn 15.9-13

31 FRI Jesus said: Peace I leave you; my peace I give you. I do not give it to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.

Jn 14.27 Col 2.9-13

JOHANNINE HOURS

JOHN 19,25-27

Johannine hours are meant as a way of seeking God in silence and prayer in the midst of our daily life. During the course of a day, take an hour or so to read the Bible passage with the short commentary and to reflect on the questions which follow. Afterwards, a group of 3 to 10 people can meet to share what they have discovered and perhaps for a time of prayer.

At the end of Jesus' life on earth, when humanly speaking there is nothing more to do, the four gospels emphasize the silent presence of the women who had followed him. In the synoptic gospels, the women look on from afar. This contemplative presence is apparently useless. But in fact it represents the only human link between the death and the resurrection of Christ. They are the ones who, coming to the tomb on the third day, will be the first to hear the announcement of Christ's Easter victory.

John for his part locates the woman "near the cross." In this fashion he shows that they participate, in their own way, in Jesus' gift of his life; they are the first beneficiaries. And John is the only one to mention that Mary, the mother of the Lord, is among them. Her presence at the foot of the cross is the culmination of her spiritual journey. From the time she spoke her "yes" in Nazareth (Luke 1,38), her whole life has been one long pilgrimage of faith, of trust in God and in her son. Often without understanding (cf. Luke 2,48), she kept everything in her heart (Luke 2,19,51), remaining faithful and open (cf. John 2,5). This long process of "letting go" prepared her for a widening of her vocation. In the person of "the disciple whom Jesus loved," every believer is entrusted to her. Her yes enables the multitude to "be born of water and the Spirit" (John 3,5; cf. 19,34) so as to become brothers and sisters of Jesus (cf. John 20,17).

- How does the example of the women present at Jesus' passion, and the life of Mary, help us to understand the meaning of contemplative prayer?
- To what extent does my own faith find support in the faith of the first witnesses to Christ, especially the Virgin Mary? How can I support the faith of others, thus participating in the "motherly" calling of the Church?

You can also read: Matthew 27,55-61 and 28,1-8; Luke 11,27-28

Russia

A treasure hidden in silence

Some Russians write about how they discern reflections of the holiness of Christ around them and how they live in the communion of saints:

"Those who do not know how to see signs of hope turn away and start dreaming about leaving this lost land. But I am always surprised to discover, at every moment, very good people who do not even belong to a circle of believers. And the Church, in spite of the shadows, has a child's heart and keeps in its depths a treasure hidden in silence.

"I see so many holy persons and moments of holiness in the life of the simple people of Russia. Some are very close to our ordinary life but at the same time so close to heaven. Sometimes I think that, for God, it is quite easy to give his Spirit in the midst of our complicated situation and among those who are so wounded.

"And I sense the presence of the saints in our land, the saints of our country, the saints of recent times. As if, from here, they radiated into heaven and then from heaven back again. They illuminate our life. All those who are unknown and all those whose memory is still alive. I think of Nicholas, killed in a camp under Stalin, and of many others whose names we do not know. They are like an invisible army that watches over our poor country under their heaven."

India

Sharing hopes and concerns

Four of us left from Italy and France for a visit lasting a few weeks in Kerala. We were asked to meet with groups of young people from different churches who were preparing for a series of meetings in October, as a new stage in India of the "pilgrimage of trust on earth."

From the beginning, we were the ones who became pilgrims: day after day, on our road we met young people, adults, elderly persons, children.

With them we shared the hopes and the concerns about an uncertain and precarious future, the fatigue and the joy of a present full of contrasts. In this simple sharing of our presence, a hope grew; we discovered, beyond our differences of language, culture, and rites, the presence of God in our history today.

The most powerful experience was in a fishing village, at Poonthura. There we met a group of young people, thirty of whom have decided to work without pay for three years in the village, to organize a programme of literacy, health education and savings.

The prayer with them, after having listened to them talk about their work, opened our eyes to their spiritual wealth. Inner life and human solidarity: the beauty of the Christian life becomes visible when these two dimensions meet.



Echoes from the continents

Send Registration Form by the December 1st to your nearest contact person in Britain, with 2 S.A.E.'s.

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TAIZE: 200,000 NEW TESTAMENTS TO ROMANIA AND BULGARIA

Thanks to donations that came through "Operation Hope," Taizé has just sent to the Orthodox Churches of Romania and Bulgaria 200,000 copies of an edition of selected texts from the New Testament for young people.

In early 1989, it had already been possible to send to the Russian Orthodox Church a million New Testaments, and 200,000 copies of selected texts in 1992.

These "selected texts from the New Testament for young people" also exist in English and French versions.

PRAYER FOR SARAJEVO

Throughout the summer, hundreds of young people from the different regions that earlier were part of Yugoslavia spent a week in Taizé. They arrived with all their worries for the future. For example, those from the city of Zadar knew that, when they returned home, they would experience shelling.

Like last year, children from Bosnia currently living near Zagreb came to spend a few weeks in Taizé. A family from Sarajevo who has lost everything is now staying in the village of Taizé for an extended period. Contacts are being kept up as regularly as possible with young people in Sarajevo. In July, one of them was able to send a fax. "I have finally found a phone that works," he wrote, "and so I immediately thought of writing these lines. Thank you for your prayers and for all you are doing for us. Day after day, Bosnia sinks deeper into confusion. Even those of us who live here, when we see all that is happening before our eyes, ask ourselves where so much hatred has come from. Regularly, each day, I go to church and pray. I believe that «God will do wonders for his friend» (Ps 4,4). Pray for us." A few weeks later, he wrote again: "I am doing well. Every day I pray and I work. Day after day God prepares for us a joy, so that, even in this darkness, there is light. My life is sometimes difficult and then you think you cannot continue. But I also understand that Jesus takes upon himself the difficult part of the road, and Jesus always has a word of comfort for each one of us." In the church at Taizé, one of the Friday evenings during the summer was particularly marked by prayer for Sarajevo. The cross was brought in the midst of the young people from that region and Brother Roger said the following prayer:

Christ Jesus, we are disconcerted by the violence, by the incomprehensible trials that our dear friends in Sarajevo and in the surrounding lands are undergoing.

We ask your forgiveness for their sufferings, and for all that we are not able to accomplish. At times they are like strangers on the earth, discouraged, losing hope for the future.

Transfigure in us the deserts of our doubts, so that we may become, with all of them, bearers of reconciliation in the situations where you place us, until the day begins to break and a dawn arises in our hearts.

→ but also the distances that still remain. So the adventure of trust continues. Many are confirmed in their feeling that this is the way the building up of Europe begins. Weaving thread by thread a new trust among people of different nations is a concrete way of working to create a reconciled Europe, open to all.

Many from the Baltic countries had already come last year. They feel at home. Among them, the Lithuanians are always the most numerous; they are in Taizé every week, and one week they filled thirteen coaches!

Estonians and Latvians are happy to let others discover their nations. The new Lutheran bishop of Riga, who already had been to Taizé three times with a group of young people, came in mid-September with a large group. For many of them, it is their first real experience of Christian life, an important step in their preparation for baptism.

One of the most impressive stories is that of the Albanians: "All the factories are closed in our country, because of the lack of raw materials or because the machinery is broken. But the young people are working to rebuild the country."

To come to Taizé, the Russians are now organizing parish groups and are accompanied by their priests. Sometimes the groups are made up of teachers and students from new schools set up by Christians.

A first group of young Bulgarians, accompanied by two Orthodox monks, arrived in Taizé just as the Bulgarian version of "excerpts from the New Testament for the young" had just come off the presses.

Throughout the summer, young Romanians, both Orthodox and Catholics, organized five coaches a week between Romania and Taizé.

With the constant presence of Romanians, Russians, Ukrainians, Bulgarians and Greeks, once or twice a week the Orthodox Liturgy is celebrated in the chapel attached to the Church of Reconciliation or in the Romanesque church.

Week after week, Church leaders also come to Taizé. They take part in the three times of prayer daily; they speak with young people from Europe and from other continents; they attend some of the meetings just to listen. Many young people are very happy that they are present.

This year, there were more Orthodox Church leaders than ever before, from Russia, Greece, Romania and Bulgaria. The Lutheran bishops from Stuttgart, Munich, and Eisenach in Germany, from Riga in Latvia, as well as several Anglican bishops from England and Ireland were present. Catholic bishops from India, the Philippines, Hungary, Poland, France and England also spent time on the hill. Cardinals Danneels from Brussels and Decourtray from Lyons visited Taizé, and Cardinal König from Austria stayed for ten days.

The first week of September was marked by the presence of 250 young Capuchin friars from Italy, with their minister general.

Some Russians explained why meetings with Christians from the West are so important for them, and the meaning that these meetings can have:

"In an open meeting, we can experience that all that is essential in human existence—love, death, the meaning of life—is identical and that the most important elements of our Christian life are similar. That helps to disarm the fears that have been fostered for a long time. It makes the prejudice disappear according to which we had enemies everywhere. Being healed of our fear of the unknown and the suspicions that keep us from loving: that is the first step.

"Each meeting likewise enables us to demystify the view of the West we have in our country: «Life there is so much better!» And then we discover the meaning and the value of Gospel poverty.

"The sincere interest that Westerners have for us enables us to discover our own gifts. Gradually, our inferiority complex is replaced by an awareness of our gifts: the gifts of our soul, of our culture, of our Church. Preparing projects of material assistance should only come after having destroyed these barriers. Praying together enables us to discover the unity of the Church of Christ on earth and to learn how to love."

Letter from Taizé

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